

STAT

**Page Denied**

STAT

POTENTIALITIES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF USSR MEDICAL JOURNALS

Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, Vol XVII, No 25 (1249),  
Moscow, 26 Mar. 1954, p 1

Editorial

Dozens of medical journals are published in the USSR. The tasks which have to be accomplished by them are very important. These journals are called upon to present everything that is new, creative, and progressive, and to give information on everything that originates in all scientific and therapeutic-prophylactic institutions. The journals must also organize discussions and foster an extensive exchange of opinions, or in other words, serve as a tribunal of criticism and self-criticism.

By developing the theory of therapeutic-prophylactic activity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and by generalizing on practical aspects of this activity, the medical journals may become and should become an important medium for the further improvement of the medical service rendered to the population. The 19th Congress of the CPSU has set as the principal task for the Soviet Public Health Service the complete development of prophylactic medicine and the most rapid practical application of the achievements of science. It is the primary duty of all medical journals to organize their activities in accordance with the historical directives given by the party.

However, many journals avoid these current tasks and, on the whole, do not contribute to their further development. Very few articles are published as yet which deal with the prophylaxis of infectious and non-infectious diseases and the causes of traumatism. For instance, the therapeutic problems discussed in the articles published in Terapevicheskiy Arkhiv (Therapeutic Archive) and Stomatologiya (Stomatology) have, as a rule, no bearing on the problems of prophylaxis. Scientific achievements in the field of therapy and prophylaxis of diseases are discussed very inadequately. Zhurnal Mikrobiologii, Epidemiologii, i Immunobiologii (Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology, and Immunobiology) seldom publishes any articles which discuss new bacterial and chemotherapeutic preparations.

The majority of journals do not reflect in their subject matter the experience acquired by therapeutic-prophylactic institutions of the periphery. These journals do not to a sufficient extent engage practical physicians to contribute articles.

Instead of discussing thoroughly the scientific methods of developing new forms of public health organization, some journals limit themselves to brief news items on the subject. This refers particularly to the journal Sovetskoye Zdravookhraneniye (Soviet Public Health Protection).

It is common knowledge that the work of the medical institutions of Kazakhstan and of the Kirghiz SSR does not proceed satisfactorily in some important respects. Considerable improvement is required there as far as the medical service given to members of kolkhozes is concerned. The medical service given to animal breeders is particularly ineffective and that given to workers in industrial enterprises leaves much to be desired. Notwithstanding this, the republic journals Zdravookhraneniye Kazakhstana (The Public Health Protection of Kazakhstan) and Sovetskoye Zdravookhraneniye Kirgizii (Soviet Public Health Protection of Kirghiziya) consider it appropriate to avoid these important problems. They often publish casual articles devoid of any content and generally trail behind the main course of current events.

New and advanced developments in medical science and public health practice are seldom mentioned in the journals. The authors of the majority of published articles reiterate or confirm things which have long been known. For instance, Sovetskiya Meditsina (Soviet Medicine) during the past year has published many

STAT

articles on the pathogenesis and therapy of various diseases, such as hypertension, whooping cough, pneumonia of children, acute suppurative inflammations, etc. However, the authors always arrive at the same conclusion, i. e., that the development of all of these different pathological forms has the same basic cause, namely a disturbance of the cortical dynamics. This, of course, is true. However, the question arises as to whether it isn't about time to discontinue the repetition of well-known truths and pay greater attention to problems of specific pathogenesis.

The journals avoid a clear formulation of scientific problems on which differences of opinion exist and seldom publish reviews of scientific research being done on important problems. For instance, the editorial board of Zhurnal Mikrobiologii, Epidemiologii, i Immunologii announced to its readers that in 1953 there would be a discussion of some problems of immunobiology and general epidemiology. The year 1953 has passed and the promise given to the readers has not been kept.

Zhurnal Nevropatologii i Psikiatrii imeni Korsakova (Journal of Neuropathology and Psychiatry imeni Korsakov) can almost be regarded as an exception. A discussion on problems of clinical psychiatry was conducted by this journal for nearly two years. Unfortunately, the editorial board was absorbed to such an extent in the great number of subjects under discussion that it could not make the necessary general conclusions on any of these subjects. Furthermore, in the concluding article, the editorial board patently misled the Soviet psychiatrists and neuropathologists by its declaration that the clinical method of investigation is not scientific. The discussions conducted in Zhurnal Vyshey Nervnoy Deyatel'nosti imeni Pavlov (Journal of Higher Nervous Activity imeni Pavlov) have been excessively rude in the light of the standards accepted by the USSR press.

The journals Khirurgiya (Surgery), Klinicheskaya Meditsina (Clinical Medicine), and Gigiyena i Sanitariya (Hygiene and Sanitation) publish information on the activities of our scientific and practical medical institutions only with great delay. Furthermore, the items in question are in a colorless official language. The journals publish material which is out of date because the editorial boards and reviewers scan much too slowly the articles being published or reviewed. The resulting delay is further increased by the Medgiz (The State Medical Publishing House) requirement that any issue of a monthly periodical must be submitted for production from 2 to 3 months prior to its publication date.

The material which is published in the journals under the heading "Criticism and Bibliography" also causes dissatisfaction. The material which is published there constitutes not reviews but brief summaries of books and monographs. These summaries are dispassionate, dull, and devoid of serious critical discussion.

The journals leave much to be desired in the way of aggressiveness of spirit and desire to forge ahead. Very little journalistic material is published and very few articles expose the reactionary ideas of bourgeois science.

One of the main shortcomings of the medical periodicals is their lack of collective spirit. The boards of editors are remote from their readers, i. e., the Soviet physicians and scientific workers. The publication plans, as a rule, are not discussed at meetings of scientific societies or at conferences arranged for the readers. Many of the members of editorial boards do not participate actively in the work of the journals.

Collaboration with contributors is very ineffective in the case of many journals. Consideration of contributed articles is often delayed for 2 or 3 years. An article accepted for publication at a meeting of the board of editors is frequently held up from issue to issue by the editors and finally rejected. It is obvious that dilatory practices and bureaucratism of this type cause much harm and discourage contributors.

STAT

Medgiz and its editorial council do not direct the work of the editorial boards of individual journals adequately. They do not receive reports from the editorial boards and do not call these boards together for mutual discussions.

Many prominent scientists are members of the editorial boards. These scientists are capable of raising the work of the medical scientific press to a high level, but their capabilities are not being adequately applied. Closer contact between the editorial boards and the readers is essential.

The work of the journals must be taken under close control by the medical community and by the scientific societies. The Scientific Council of the Ministry of Public Health USSR and the Presidium of the Academy of Medical Sciences USSR must receive and consider systematically reports made by the editorial boards of journals rather than consider them from case to case on a selective basis as has been done hitherto.

The medical journals are a powerful weapon in the fight for the development of Soviet medical science and for the improvement of all aspects of public health. This weapon should be utilized to the fullest possible extent.

- E N D -

STAT